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HEADLINE: A journey of decades leads to College Park; New president says he's been preparing since the 1960s

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BODY:

BERKELEY, Calif. -- The journey for Dan Mote will be a long one, clear across the country, from a shabby little office building by the University of California to the spacious president's office at the University of Maryland, College Park.

He has yet to pack his bags, but in many ways his journey began more than three decades ago.

"It was 1964, or thereabouts, and I was an assistant professor at Carnegie Tech," the 61-year-old engineer recalled in his office here this week.

"A mechanical engineer became president of the university, and that's when I really started to think about what I wanted to do.

"I started to think what a president could do, the impact they have, and I guess in some ways I began preparing myself."

His teaching was stellar, his research groundbreaking. But those qualities are not enough to become a university president these days. At the highest levels of academia, paying dues means raising big money.

Mote knew this. And with typical pragmatism, he would not only become good at raising money, he would become great at it.

More than anything, his fund-raising abilities positioned him to take over at College Park. He begins as its 27th president this fall, replacing William E. "Brit" Kirwan, who will become president of Ohio State University.

"There's no doubt that raising money has become a major part of the responsibilities -- and indeed the expectations -- of a college president," Kirwan said.

"That has changed somewhat the characteristics in people who are looked at for university presidencies."

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Mote's office -- in a three-story commercial building just off campus -- is hardly an ivory tower.

Frayed powder-blue carpet covers the lobby floor. A travel agency and barber shop are on the first floor.

From there, he not only has honed his fund-raising skills but developed a philosophy of what makes for a great university.

"It's not just money," he said. "It's a very complex, delicate flower that you have to create. It's creating an atmosphere of support. It's the quality of the students, the faculty, the library access."

But still, much of that comes back to money. And nobody plays a bigger part in bringing it in than university presidents.

Across the country they are bemoaning the time and energy they must spend on fund-raising. A few years ago, Harvard University's president took a sabbatical after the stress of raising \$ 2.2 billion -- about \$ 1 million a day -- began to eat away at his health.

Mote, with no substantial ties to Maryland, said his biggest challenge will be to learn about the people and institutions willing to donate to College Park. But, he noted, many of those constituencies are already built in.

"Businesses, for example, know the need for a strong flagship university and for the system as a whole being good," Mote said. "Without that, you're not going to have those economic developments. You don't have the consultants, you don't have the climate for succeeding."

His success at Maryland should begin to become evident in three to five years, he said. "But it's an evolving thing. Ten years down the road you want to be able to say, 'That was a really good move,' or 'That was a really good hire.' "

However long it might take, Mote said, he is not prepared to fail.

"I'm totally committed to this," he said. "My wife and I are coming there set on the goal of making the campus one of the top 10 in the United States. That's where the ball is rolling."

Clayton Daniel Mote Jr. has spent almost his entire life in the Golden State.

He was born in San Francisco, just across the Bay Bridge from Berkeley, where he attended college. He graduated with a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering in 1959, a master's in 1960 and a doctorate in 1963.

It was a homecoming, then, when he began teaching at Berkeley in 1967, after his time at Carnegie Tech. And in California, his academic career rocketed.

His research won international attention. His students loved him. He was animated in the classroom, even a touch eccentric. The students laughed, with affection, at the daily sight of him dressed in suit, tie and a way-too-big crash helmet riding his 10-speed bicycle past backed-up traffic crawling along the winding roads of Berkeley.

"He was different. He was fun. He would pose questions. He would get excited about what he was teaching," said Dennis Lieu, one of Mote's former students, who now teaches at Berkeley.

"The environment in his classes was one of excitement, and he really was my inspiration for continuing in mechanical engineering."

Treating his students as colleagues, Mote insisted that they call him Dan. He invited them to his home for elaborate dinner parties in Upper Claremont, a hillside neighborhood of houses that go for as much as \$ 1 million and overlook the northern part of San Francisco Bay and the Golden Gate Bridge.

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"His secret," said Lieu, "was getting his students to love him."

In 1971, Mote received the University of California Distinguished Teaching Award, a sought-after prize that he won for his research and for his strong ties to students.

He was an avid skier, and one of his passions was using his research in biomechanics to create safer ski bindings. His other was his children, Adam and Missy, with whom he often played in the neighborhood.

"He was always active with his kids," recalled Kip Edenborough, a neighbor of more than 25 years. "That says he was a good father, but it also probably says something about his energy level."

Acknowledged Mote: "I do have energy. And I don't get burned out. There's really no reason to get burned out in this business. In academia, if you're tired of what you're doing, you can do something else within academia."

Mote's prodigious energy extended to the highly competitive pursuit of donations in 1991, when he became a vice chancellor at Berkeley and co-chairman of an effort to raise \$ 1.1 billion for the school.

The effort has brought in \$ 765 million, more than the \$ 700 million that the entire University System of Maryland has set for the goal of its similar fund-raising campaign.

The cash came from hard work.

In conversation, Mote comes across as disarming. But his white mane and his Jimmy Stewart-like mannerisms belie a calculated determination.

"I think he's always prepared for his next move," said Sean Kirby, 31, another neighbor. "I remember those little dinner parties he would have. They probably prepared him for the gigantic parties he has now with his new job."

Those parties, thrown at his house, grew so large that Mote would hire a valet service to park his guests' cars. His wife, Patsy, a talented chef, had to hire outside people to help prepare the food.

"When you want to raise money," Mote said, "you don't do it by suddenly calling someone up and asking them to donate. You identify constituencies, you cultivate them and you make them part of your process."

"The days of the ivory tower have been dead for a long time, but they're quite dead at the moment."

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